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SIPDIS

STATE PASS TO AF/FO, AND AF/RSA FOR WHALDEMAN

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: USAU: AU HOPING TO MOBILIZE AFRICAN LEADERS
AGAINST MUGABE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN A. SIMON, REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: African Union Chairperson and President of Tanzania Jakaya Kikwete is going to convene certain African heads of state in Pretoria on December 14 in hopes that they can forge a strong enough message to deliver to Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe to pressure him to implement a power-sharing agreement. The USAU Ambassador encouraged the AU leadership to act decisively against Mugabe, noting failure to do so could extend the crisis and lead to others in the international community taking their own initiatives outside the AU. End Summary.

¶2. (C) AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping met with USAU Ambassador on December 10 to discuss an initiative by AU Chairperson and President of Tanzania Kikwete aimed at pressuring Zimbabwe's President Mugabe to implement a power-sharing agreement with his rival, Movement for Democratic Change leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Ping said Zimbabwe's political deadlock necessitated AU action.

¶3. (C) At Kikwete's request, Ping said he contacted individual ambassadors representing countries currently chairing the eight African regional economic commissions recognized by the AU: CEN-SAD (Benin), COMESA (Rwanda), EAC (Kenya), ECCAS (Democratic Republic of Congo), ECOWAS (Burkina Faso), IGAD (Ethiopia), SADC (South Africa), and UMA (Libya). He informed them of Kikwete's plan and asked them to invite their respective heads of state to a summit meeting in Pretoria on December 14. At that meeting, which Kikwete and Ping will attend, the heads of state will attempt to agree on a common message to deliver to Mugabe during a follow-on meeting in Harare, potentially the following day. (Note: Ping opined that Libya's Qadhafi would not attend because of South Africa's opposition to union government. End Note.)

¶4. (C) When the South African Ambassador to the AU first heard of Kikwete's plan, he apparently was not pleased, viewing it as a "new initiative" that would limit SADC's mediation role in the Zimbabwe crisis. However, Ping said Kikwete had already reached out to South African President Motlante and agreed to hold the summit in Pretoria. Ping said that the AU's resolution on Zimbabwe adopted last July in Sharm-El-Sheikh provided for its involvement in the process as well as giving SADC the overall lead.

¶5. (C) USAU Ambassador expressed the USG's hope that the proposed summit on Zimbabwe would "lead to something decisive" and not be a "step backward" that could further entrench Mugabe's regime. He added that the USG wanted to see representational government in Zimbabwe that could bring an end to the humanitarian crisis, including the current cholera epidemic threatening the Zimbabwean people. Given recent events -- including the disintegration of state

institutions, the unconstitutional re-appointment of the Central Bank Governor, and the continuing violence and intimidation -- the U.S. doesn't believe Mugabe can be a credible power-sharing partner.

¶6. (C) Ping said he doubted whether the heads of state would go as far as calling for Mugabe's resignation, and given Mugabe's refusal to accept even "minor things," he also did not believe Mugabe would accept a proposal for new elections.

He dismissed a call by Kenyan Prime Minister Odinga for Mugabe to resign, saying that Odinga has made such statements in the past and "this is nothing new." That said, Ping was obviously concerned about the possibility of Mugabe being ousted by force. A recent interview on France 24 seems to have persuaded him that an "outside force" is being readied.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador noted the time had passed for Mugabe to have a veto over the resolution of the crisis. Ping replied that if the U.S. wanted the option of Mugabe's resignation to be on the table, it would need to reach out to the attendees of the mini-summit. He noted the USG has missions in all of the relevant countries.

¶8. (C) The Ambassador said that unless the AU adopts a stronger stand against Mugabe, other countries and organizations will act on their own. "We want to see the AU be the lead organization in solving Africa's problems," he said. "Others might not be as effective and (their intervention) would hurt the long-term goal of the AU."

Comment:

ADDIS ABAB 00003336 002 OF 002

¶9. (C) Ping, who cast himself as Kikwete's messenger, appeared to have his own doubts about the likelihood of this mini-summit succeeding in changing Mugabe's mind. He noted that Mugabe had rebuffed an earlier attempt by Kikwete to resolve the situation last spring, even refusing to talk to Kikwete.

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